

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2005

**Listen to the Experts: Current Stem Cell Policy
Puts U.S. Researchers at a Disadvantage**

Dear Colleague,


Last week, a number of NIH Institute Directors publicly stated that the current federal embryonic stem cell policy is overly restrictive and is hindering scientific progress. These top experts expressed serious concerns with current policy. We would like to share their comments with you.


"...progress has been delayed by the limited number of cell lines...Yes, the NIH has ceded leadership in this field to the new California agency. California's initiative will allow U.S. researchers funded by that state to have the same unrestricted access to all [stem cell] lines that are available to researchers in Asia and Europe, but these new lines will not be available to NIH-funded investigators. Because U.S. researchers who depend on Federal funds lack access to newer [stem cell] lines, they are at a technological disadvantage relative to researchers funded by California, as well as investigators in Asia and Europe. Despite NIH efforts to encourage investigators to use the [stem cell] lines that are acceptable for Federally funded research, the restricted access will hamper NIH's ability to recruit and retain talented young scientists working in the field of [stem cell] research."

--Dr. Elizabeth Nabel
Director, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

The current embryonic stem cell policy must be changed. We can no longer tie the hands of our scientists when millions of lives are at stake. We hope you will join us in cosponsoring H.R. 810, the Castle-DeGette "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act." This bill provides for federal funding of stem cell research and requires that strong ethical standards be implemented. For more information, contact Elizabeth Pika at (202) 225-2906 or Alissa Southworth at (202) 225-5206.

Sincerely,


Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress


Charles Bass
Member of Congress

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House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2005

**Listen to the Experts: Current Stem Cell Policy
Hinders Research**

Dear Colleague,

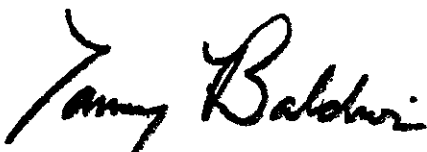
Last week, a number of NIH Institute Directors publicly stated that the current federal embryonic stem cell policy is overly restrictive and is hindering scientific progress. These top experts expressed serious concerns with current policy. We would like to share their comments with you.

"...it is clear that the state of the science is evolving very rapidly, and limitations of the President's policy become more apparent since I last testified in April 2004...The scientific community has expressed concern over the long-term stability of the [stem cell] lines eligible for federal funding. There is growing evidence that the [stem cell] lines available on the NIH [registry] are showing epigenetic and genetic changes in small regions of the chromosome. Although these lines are being used to study the basic biology of [stem cells], their use in clinical applications is questionable. There is confusion among scientists and administrators at universities where scientists have both Federal and non-Federal funding for [stem cell] research about exactly what research infrastructure or core facilities developed with NIH funds in the past can be used in studies involving cell lines not eligible for Federal funding."

--Dr. James Battey
Director, National Institute on Deafness Disorders

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Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



Charles Bass
Member of Congress

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House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2005

**Listen to the Experts: Current Stem Cell Policy
Is Inadequate and Cumbersome**

Dear Colleague,


Last week, a number of NIH Institute Directors publicly stated that the current federal embryonic stem cell policy is overly restrictive and is hindering scientific progress. These top experts expressed serious concerns with current policy. We would like to share their comments with you.


"NICHD scientists report some problems in obtaining the few [stem cell] lines that they have sought. Apart from the challenges inherent in working with any [stem cell] line, the researchers report incidents of 1) inadequate quantity and quality (e.g., a small number of frozen cells that thaw poorly are provided); 2) difficult ethical choices between waiting for permission to use a second cell line, if article reviewers require more data, or expanding authorship to a scientist who already has permission to use the second cell line, but had no role in the reported research; and 3) high prices, "cumbersome" procedures, and long waiting times."

--Dr. Duane Alexander
Director, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

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